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Identical letters dated 26 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/60).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the positions that it has previously communicated in its identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council responding to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015). In its current response, it would also like to stress the following points:

1. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it is committed to cooperating with United Nations agencies and international organizations operating in Syria to deliver humanitarian assistance, without discrimination, to civilian beneficiaries who have been affected by the crisis in all parts of Syria, in keeping with its constitutional obligations and with General Assembly resolution 46/182. The Syrian Government also reaffirms that it stands ready to cooperate and coordinate with the United Nations, in the spirit of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to remove the obstacles and challenges to the operation of humanitarian aid convoys, while taking into account the need to ensure the security and safety of humanitarian workers and to make certain that aid reaches civilian beneficiaries who have been affected by the crisis instead of falling into the hands of terrorists. The Syrian Government also reiterates that the successful delivery of humanitarian assistance depends above all on the United Nations cooperating with the Syrian Government. The United Nations must display greater transparency and avoid politicizing the high-minded aspirations of humanitarian work.

2. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic again denounces efforts by the report's authors to attribute successes in humanitarian aid delivery in 2015 to the United Nations alone without giving due credit to the Syrian Government. One might well ask if the United Nations would have been able to deliver humanitarian assistance to millions of civilians in most of the country's governorates without extensive cooperation from the Syrian Government and the facilities it has provided to the United Nations and other international organizations at the present time and

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over the past few years. The Syrian Government's cooperation has been the cornerstone of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilian beneficiaries who have been affected by the crisis. The logistical facilities and protection provided by the Government remain the foundation of all successful delivery efforts. The best evidence of that is the figures supplied in paragraphs 32 to 34 of the latest report, which show that the World Food Programme (WFP) has been able to deliver assistance through the Nusaybin crossing on a monthly basis despite numerous attempts by the Turkish Government to obstruct that operation. The cooperation of the Syrian Government with the United Nations throughout the years of crisis is what has allowed the United Nations to implement previous humanitarian response plans. It is what made possible agreement on the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan in the face of politicization and a funding shortfall caused by donors' failure to fulfil their pledges.

3. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is surprised that the Secretariat should persist in the same politicized approaches that it has adopted since it began preparing these monthly reports in spite of all the new developments that have emerged over the course of the Syrian crisis. The impression gained by the reader is that the Secretariat insists on reliving past events that took place in the years 2013 and 2014. It is preposterous that the Secretariat continues to rely on undocumented information, including that provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). It cites dubious reports that are devoid of truth and come from persons and parties with no credibility, thereby kowtowing to the whims of intelligence agencies hostile to Syria. Adopting the agendas of certain States and applying a double standard to human rights questions undermines the mandate and functions of UNHCR. Is it not shameful that paragraphs 5, 6 and 17 of this report cite events and allegations that it was not possible to verify? How is that not politicization? It is clear that the objective of UNHCR is nothing more than to hurl accusations at the Syrian Government and its allies.

4. The claim put forward in paragraph 6 about the use of chemical weapons is intended solely to portray the Syrian Government as a violator of its international obligations. The Government categorically denies that claim which, in its view, supports and defends the terrorists. If the authors truly want to preserve international peace and security, they should take a more factual approach that steers clear of politicization and bias in favour of the armed terrorist groups. They should adhere to the guiding principles for humanitarian work annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/182. That is particularly true now, nearly five years after the onset of the Syrian crisis, which all and sundry are aware has its roots in terrorism that has been covertly and overtly supported primarily by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, which are in turn backed by Western States that are hostile to Syria and bent on infringing on its sovereignty and independence.

5. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again rejects the Secretariat's continued use of the terms "non-State armed opposition groups" or "rebels" to describe the terrorist groups. Those terms appear in paragraphs 6, 7, 9 to 12 and 15 of the current report, and are designed to sidestep the relevant Security Council counter-terrorism resolutions and appease certain Member States of the United Nations. The Syrian Government reiterates that such terms and designations have no firm basis in international law or international agreements, and there is no consensus about their meaning among the Member States. Furthermore, the Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's focus on the Islamic State in Iraq and the

Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization to the exclusion of the Nusrah Front, which is on the Security Council's list of terrorist individuals, organizations, institutions and entities.

6. The Syrian Government reiterates its firm rejection of the aspersions cast by the Secretariat in paragraph 16 on efforts by the Russian Federation to assist the Syrian State in its war against terrorism. At the request of the Syrian Government, the Russian Air Force has provided air cover in support of the Syrian Arab Army's operations to liberate Syrian areas from the armed terrorist groups. The Syrian Government also strongly rejects the Secretariat's attempts to equate the counter-terrorism efforts of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces and the Russian Air Force with the air bombardment of infrastructure, services, gas and oil facilities being carried out by the so-called United States-led coalition forces. That approach confers legitimacy on the coalition's activities, which violate the Charter of the United Nations under the pretext of, inter alia, fighting the ISIL terrorist organization. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the Secretariat's conduct and rejects all of the allegations levelled at the Syrian-Russian counter-terrorism efforts. It is regrettable that the authors should choose to rely on the same biased and politicized sources of information used to support the agendas of the Western States that are supporting the terrorism and are upset by the success of joint Syrian-Russian efforts in combating it. The authors' claim that Syrian-Russian military operations are targeting civilians is devoid of truth. The Syrian Government affirms that all operations have been and continue to be directed against the terrorist groups, their members and their supply lines.

7. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejects the claims in paragraph 22 of the report about airstrikes hitting a number of locations in Idlib city, and confirms that it is in compliance with the Four Towns ceasefire agreement covering Zabadani, Madaya, Fu'ah and Kafraya and surrounding areas.

8. Since the beginning of the crisis, which was precipitated by foreign-sponsored terrorism and has been going on for close to five years, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has worked for a peaceful resolution that takes into account the initiation of a dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership with a view to achieving the aspirations of the Syrian people in parallel with continuing to fight terrorism. Today, on the eve of the Geneva III conference, the Security Council should call on States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to desist from providing any kind of support and financing to such groups, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and terrorist financing, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015).

9. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its position that cross-border assistance is futile, and condemns once more the lack of transparency with which the authors have chosen to cover that topic. The notifications being sent to the Syrian Government are riddled with inaccurate figures, information, numbers of beneficiaries and particulars on which parties collect aid to distribute it to civilian recipients. As a result, the Syrian Government has no way of knowing how, and by whom, humanitarian assistance is being distributed. What is certain is that cross-border assistance is finding its way into the hands of the armed terrorists, or they are appropriating it, distributing some of it to their members and selling the rest to civilians at exorbitant prices on the black market. In that regard, we wish to underscore that the Turkish regime's intelligence apparatus is using cross-border

humanitarian assistance convoys to smuggle in weapons for the armed terrorist groups that serve as its proxies.

10. The Syrian Government reiterates its position that the United Nations is unable to deliver humanitarian assistance to hotspots. The Government has made it clear previously that the failure of the United Nations to act on more than half of the authorizations that it was granted to operate joint convoys to deliver assistance to hotspots in April and June 2015 remains the primary reason why it has failed to reach other areas. Other reasons include the lack of transparency the United Nations demonstrated at the time in its dealings with the Government concerning the operation of the convoys, and the Organization's failure to inform the Government of its difficulties in attempting to act on the authorizations so that those difficulties could have been resolved.

11. The fact that the United Nations is not sending joint convoys to certain areas does not mean that other international organizations are not reaching those areas. The Syrian Government is surprised by the hue and cry over assistance convoys, given that paragraphs 35, 36, 39 and 55 to 57 of the Secretary-General's current report show that United Nations convoys — joint or otherwise — have reached many hotspots. Those convoys have been operated with facilities and cooperation provided by the Syrian Government. In that regard, we draw attention to the fact that the Syrian Government granted approval to a number of United Nations requests to send assistance convoys to Bludan, Mu'addamiyah and Tall in Rif Dimashq governorate and Harbnafsah, Muhradah, Suqaylibiyah, Salamiyah and Saburah in Hama governorate. The Syrian Government stresses that it continues to cooperate and coordinate with United Nations agencies and such other international organizations as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to deliver humanitarian assistance to its nationals and others directly affected by the crisis, or some 6 million beneficiaries monthly (paragraph 64). It also continues to provide the necessary facilities to deliver humanitarian assistance from within Syria to affected civilians in all parts of Syria without discrimination. The Syrian Government stresses that the obstacles to humanitarian assistance efforts and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to hotspots are caused by armed terrorist groups that have deployed over a number of areas and have support from the region and beyond.

12. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic cannot condone the authors' lack of objectivity regarding the suffering of Syrians affected by the crisis and by terrorism supported by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The report offers dry recitations of the armed terrorist groups' suicide bombings and deliberate mortar and rocket attacks on civilians in residential neighbourhoods and schools in Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, Rif Dimashq and Hasakah without designating those attacks as terrorist acts. The authors also discriminate among Syrians by focusing on the suffering of Syrians in Madaya while failing to mention the suffering of their brothers in Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqah, Kafraya and Fu'ah; by leaving out mention of the besieged towns of Nubul and Zahra'; and by describing members of armed terrorist groups located in Darayya as civilians. That stance serves the agendas of certain Arab, regional and Western States that are bent on destroying Syria and its people.

13. The vast majority of requests for entry and residence visas for the Syrian Arab Republic have received a positive response. More than 97 per cent of such requests had been approved as of 30 November 2015. There was only one case in which the

United Nations was informed that a visa request had been declined. The meaningless talk of bureaucracy shows that certain United Nations officials have no respect for the procedures that States have adopted in order to handle matters that are important, indeed necessary, for the maintenance of their sovereignty and security. We feel compelled to point out that decisions on requests for visas by certain diplomats to carry out their tasks at permanent missions to United Nations Headquarters in New York sometimes take several months.

14. The Syrian Government reiterates that it is committed to providing the necessary facilities for the work of foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria. Recently, with a view to enhancing the activities of such organizations intended to serve Syrians affected by the crisis, it has responded to a number of proposals submitted by the Resident Coordinator for United Nations activities, and the Resident Coordinator has been so informed.

15. Lastly, we wish to address the Secretary-General's comments regarding the ramifications of the continued crisis in Syria, the suffering inflicted on civilians as a result, and the waves of displaced persons who are leaving Syria. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that before the crisis, Syria and its citizens enjoyed security, stability and dignity. However, certain States and their terrorist proxies began to undermine stability and security in Syria, with States in the region and beyond supporting the terrorists with weapons, materiel, ammunition, criminals, and intelligence and logistical support. Syrians are suffering because of terrorism. They are being criminally and indiscriminately bombarded by armed terrorist groups — referred to in the report as "armed non-State opposition groups" — that are targeting defenceless residential areas and the economic and service infrastructure. The groups are using various forms of projectiles that have indiscriminate effects, including rockets, "hellfire" cannons, explosive gas cylinders and other locally made missiles. They also use advanced weapons such as explosive missiles and TOW missiles, the sources of which are well known to all.

16. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to fulfil its duty towards its citizens in full respect for its constitutional responsibilities, in order to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people.

17. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex I to the identical letters dated 26 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Indiscriminate attacks and crimes committed by ISIL, the Nusrah Front, the Free Army, the Army of Islam, the Army of Conquest and other armed terrorist groups ignored by the authors of the report

- In the period from 21 November to 21 December 2015, terrorists killed 190 civilians, including 42 children, and injured 524 civilians, including 109 children, across the governorates of Syria, not including Raqqah, Idlib and Dayr al-Zawr.
- On 3 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Army of Islam and the Rahman Corps indiscriminately fired mortar shells and locally made missiles at residential areas in the city of Damascus, including Baghdad street, the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the Faculty of Sciences and Rukn al-Din. Two women were killed and 15 civilians were injured. In Rif Dimashq, the Nusrah Front fired mortar shells and locally made missiles at the villages of Jandal and Bqa'sim in Qatana, killing four civilians and injuring two others.
- On 3 December 2015, in the countryside of Aleppo governorate, armed terrorist groups belonging to the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the villages of Subayhah and Balat fired rockets at the districts of Safirah and Tall Urun, killing two children and injuring six civilians.
- On 4 December 2015, in Dar'a governorate, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Nusrah Front fired mortar shells and rockets at the village of Qaytah, killing three civilians. On 5 December, they fired mortar shells and rockets from the town of Inkhil at the town of Sanamayn, killing four civilians and injuring one other.
- On 8 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Muhajirin Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Bani Zayd neighbourhood fired bullets, mortar shells and gas cylinder missiles towards residential neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, including Khalidiyah, Mogambo, Suryan al-Qadimah, the Faculty of Literature and Shahba'). Twelve civilians were killed and 62 others were injured, including women and children. Extensive material damage was also caused. On 10 December, the same terrorist groups fired mortar shells, gas cylinder missiles and rockets at residential areas including Nile Street, Ashrafiyah and Hamdaniyah, killing 11 civilians, injuring 72 others and causing material damage.
- On 10 December 2015, in Hasakah governorate, three suicide bombers detonated three vans in the town of Tall Tamr, killing 28 civilians and injuring 125, most of them women and children. The blast sites sustained extensive material damage. In the village of Nusayrat, a car bomb killed one civilian and injured two others.

- On 12 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Nusrah Front organization in Jabal al-Zawiyah, in Idlib, fired rockets at Ayn Sulaymu and Jurin, killing and injuring two women.

- On 13 December 2015, the terrorist organization ISIL detonated a booby-trapped van in the Zahra' neighbourhood of Homs city, killing 15 civilians, injuring 109 others and causing extensive material damage.

- On 13 and 14 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Army of Islam and the Rahman Corps located in the Jawbar quarter fired mortar shells and locally made missiles at residential neighbourhoods of Damascus city, including Hamra' street, the inside and back of the Dar al-Salam school, the Sham Hotel building, the preparatory school, Abu Rummanah, the children's hospital building, Mazra'ah, Sha'lan and Qassa'. Seven civilians were killed, 20 others were injured and material damage was caused.

- On 14 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Army of Islam and the Nusrah Front in the agricultural areas around the towns of Harasta, Duma and Arbin fired mortar shells and locally made missiles at the residential areas of Rif Dimashq, including the Wafidin camp and the Assad residential suburb in Harasta. Eight civilians were killed, 37 others were injured and material damage was caused. On 24 December, the terrorist organizations Army of Islam and Rahman Corps fired mortar shells at the Assad suburb in Harasta, killing a girl and injuring three other children.

- On 21 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Muhajirin Brigade and Northern Shield located in the town of Bani Zayd fired gas cylinder missiles at the Salah al-Din and Nile street areas of Aleppo city. Two women were killed and five civilians were injured. On 22 December, two civilians were killed and an adult and child were injured in the Halab al-Jadidah quarter.

- On 22 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Army of Conquest and Ahrar al-Sham in the town of Kafr Zayta and in Wadi al-Anz fired rockets at the towns of Suqaylabiyah and Sahlab in Hama governorate. Two civilians were killed, 10 others were injured and material damage was caused.

- On 27 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Army of Islam, the Nusrah Front and the Rahman Corps located in the parks around the towns of Harasta, Duma and Arbin fired mortar shells at residential areas in Rif Dimashq, including the Wafidin camp and the Assad residential suburb in Harasta. Nine civilians were killed, 17 others were injured and material damage was caused.

- On 27 December 2015, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front located in the village of Lataminah, district of Muhradah, fired rockets at the village of Qumhanah in Hama governorate. A girl was killed, nine civilians were injured and material damage was caused.

- On 27 December 2015, a missile left behind by armed terrorist groups exploded in the rubbish dump near Tall al-Quba' adjacent to the Jurah

neighbourhood of the town of Khan Arnabah, Qunaytirah governorate. A girl was killed and four other children were injured.

- On 26 December 2015, the terrorist organization ISIL carried out two successive suicide bombings in the Zahra' residential neighbourhood of Homs city, Homs governorate, claiming more than 24 lives and over one hundred injuries, some of them serious.

Annex II to the identical letters dated 26 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Examples of humanitarian assistance that was delivered in December 2015 thanks to the facilitation provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Also listed is assistance delivered by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid and medical assistance), provided from inside Syrian territory by United Nations organizations, to various governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Qunaytirah, Hasakah, Aleppo and Dar'a, but not to Raqqah or Dayr al-Zawr governorates. Some 1,620,990 Syrian beneficiaries (324,198 families) received food parcels provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Some 978,695 beneficiaries (195,739 families) received food parcels provided by the United Nations through non-governmental organizations. The total number of the beneficiaries of United Nations assistance distributed from inside Syrian territory thus stands at 2,599,685 (519,937 families). The above-mentioned assistance was distributed to the governorates as follows: 61,454 parcels in Rif Dimashq; 22,841 parcels in Dar'a and its countryside; 8,777 parcels in Qunaytirah; 52,428 parcels in Aleppo and its countryside; 346 parcels in Hasakah; 31,758 parcels in Hama and its countryside; and 68,332 parcels in Homs and its countryside.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross from inside Syrian territory to most governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Idlib, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Aleppo and Hama. A total of 102,776 food parcels were delivered, in addition to 49,483 parcels of canned food. An additional 15,636 parcels provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were distributed in Homs, Damascus and Aleppo governorates.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid and medical assistance) provided by United Nations entities and foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria to Aleppo, Hasakah, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Suwayda', Tartus and Ladhiqiyah governorates, benefiting hundreds of thousands of families.

- The Syrian Government renewed its approval for WFP to bring humanitarian assistance through the Nusaybin crossing on the Syrian-Turkish border until the end of 2015 in order to allow the food rations allocated for October and November 2015 to be brought in. As a result, 48,484 food rations (20 tons of peanut butter and 32,000 sacks of flour) were distributed to beneficiaries in Hasakah governorate in October and 48,434 food rations (20 tons of peanut butter) in November.